

TRAFFICKING IN PERSON REPORT ON KOSOVO

Excerpted from 2006 Trafficking in Person Report

Kosovo, while technically a part of Serbia and Montenegro, continued to be administered under the authority of the United Nations Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Since June 1999, UNMIK has provided transitional administration for Kosovo, and retains ultimate authority over anti-trafficking roles such as police and justice, but is slowly transferring capacity to local institutions. UNMIK is aware of the trafficking problem in Kosovo and continued to conduct anti-trafficking efforts with the OSCE, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), and local and international NGOs. Responsibility for social support to victims of trafficking is shared by UNMIK, PISG, and international organizations.

Kosovo is a source, transit, and destination point for women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation. Some involuntary domestic servitude and forced labor occurs. Internal trafficking continued to grow into a more serious problem. Over 80 percent of identified victims assisted were minors. IOM reported 64 percent of victims from Kosovo assisted in 2005 were internally trafficked, 15 percent were trafficked into Macedonia, with 13 percent trafficked into Albania and Italy. UNMIK's Trafficking in Human Beings Unit (THBS) reported the foreign victims it assisted were trafficked mainly from Moldova, Albania, and Bulgaria. A growing number of Albanian and Kosovar victims were re-trafficked in Kosovo in 2005. The commercial sex trade continued to shift more underground and become increasingly clandestine in Kosovo, and traffickers increasingly use financial incentives to encourage victims to refuse assistance.

Prosecution

There continued to be a significant gap between the number of police raids and arrests in 2005; the THBS reported that traffickers are often tipped off to its operations. The THBS carried out 2,000 raids during the reporting period, but arrested only 33 suspects. In 2005, the THBS conducted 45 searches of private residences for trafficking victims. The THBS identified 49 victims, assisted 38, and repatriated 14. In July, three Albanian citizens were convicted of trafficking and sentenced to 10 and 12 years. In November a UNHCR official was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for exploitation of a minor. The majority of sentences for traffickers ranged from one to three years.

Weak sentencing for convicted traffickers continued to be a significant obstacle, due to corruption and a cultural misperception of the key differences between trafficking and smuggling and force and consent. Prosecutors reportedly do not seek the strongest charges for traffickers due to misperception, lack of training and collusion with traffickers.

Protection

Investigation and prosecution continued to be hampered by a lack of adequate witness protection in 2005. Prosecutors continued to request the victim testify in the presence of their traffickers, although the law stipulated otherwise. In 2005, a consortium of local and international actors involved in anti-trafficking (the international and local police services, victim advocates, the OSCE, and local NGOs) introduced a standard operating procedure (SOP) to improve the previous duplicative and inefficient process of victim assistance and referral. Under the SOP, identified victims are referred by the THBS to one of 23 victim advocates across Kosovo who provide direct assistance to victims.

Prevention

In May 2005, the PISG published an action plan to consolidate all relevant anti-trafficking actors and actions under one framework. IOM and UNMIK led several anti-trafficking awareness campaigns in 2005, one of which targeted potential clients in the sex industry and one to increase victim assistance, including opening an anonymous hotline for victims and vulnerable groups. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with an NGO, continued to be involved in awareness campaigns in schools.